

# DOOR = JAR



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Maxwell Bauman, Editor-in-Chief/ Art Director

Jack Fabian, Managing Editor/ Nonfiction Editor

Nina Long, Fiction Editor

Corrine Nulton, Poetry Editor/ Drama Editor

Cover Image "Hermosa Beach Sunset" by Cam Rogers

## Table of Contents

- p. 7** Statute of Love by Rachel Tramonte
- p. 8** The Smallest Color by Michael Mackin O'Mara
- p. 10** On These Nights by Michael Mackin O'Mara
- p. 11** My Father's Fruit Stand by Jack Donahue
- p. 13** Of Two Worlds by Alexandra Balasa
- p. 17** Underneath by Suzanne O'Connell
- p. 18** The Vegetarian and the Liar by Suzanne O'Connell
- p. 19** The Stale Ginger Ale by Marc Tretin
- p. 20** Wire Hangars by Marc Tretin
- p. 21** The Tennis Ball Gone Soft and Still Deflating by Marc Tretin
- p. 22** Navigation by Ailey O'Toole
- p. 23** Invertebrates by Judy Darley
- p. 25** Sirje Sets the Town On Fire by Christopher Kuhl
- p. 26** Mary Quite Contrary Jack D. Harvey
- p. 27** What I Want to Know by Donna L. Emerson
- p. 29** Last Class by Donna L. Emerson
- p. 31** Hollow Body by Barbara Tramonte
- p. 32** Solitude by Barbara Tramonte
- p. 33** Could we be the same? by Barbara Tramonte
- p. 34** Hermosa Beach Sunset by Cam Rogers
- p. 35** In Winter, I Will Grieve for Her by Dana Robbins
- p. 36** Like A Freight Train by Dana Robbins
- p. 37** Feet: A Love Story by Dana Robbins
- p. 39** What does the moon know by Eva-Maria Sher
- p. 40** Nearest Exit by Eva-Maria Sher
- p. 42** Grass by Alison Hicks
- p. 43** Sea Otter by Alison Hicks
- p. 44** Lobsters by Marty Carlock
- p. 45** Another Interrupted Dream by Bill Wolak
- p. 46** How to Synthesize a Son by Victor Altshul
- p. 47** Cuzco by Victor Altshul
- p. 49** Avocado by Warren Paul Glover
- p. 50** The Breakup by Katherine Nazzaro
- p. 51** Exit Strategy by Akpa Arinzechukwu

**p. 53** Not at Novena to Saints Catherine of Siena & Felicitas of Rome by Akpa Arinzechukwu

**p. 56** Crystals by F.I. Goldhaber

**p. 57** Blood Moon by F.I. Goldhaber

**p. 58** Special Delivery by Eileen M. Cunniffe

**p. 62** Race Day: Advice From A Cross-Country Parent by Laura C. Wendorff

**p. 64** Letter by Shawna Ervin

**p. 65** Becoming Superman by Trevor Pyle

**p. 66** Bristlecone Pine by Lynn Hoggard

**p. 67** The Living Myth of Sunshine Bridge by Lynn Hoggard

**p. 69** His Suicides by Mark Belair

**p. 70** Ode by Mark Belair

**p. 71** Born Again by Mark Belair

**p. 72** The Girl with the Gold Heart by Craig Rodgers

**p. 75** May you revisit this memory often by Yvonne Higgins Leach

**p. 76** Moth Snowstorms by Yvonne Higgins Leach

**p. 78** In their futures by Yvonne Higgins Leach

**p. 80** Popsicles and a lifetime later by Yvonne Higgins Leach

**p. 82** The Note by Maria DeSantis

**p. 83** Heart Brake by Maria DeSantis

**p. 84** Standing Outside by Rie Sheridan Rose

**p. 85** Unguarded by Valerie Griggs

**p. 86** Zihuatanajo, 1975 by Iris Litt

**p. 87** The Vendor by Stephane Kaplan Cohen

**p. 88** Contributor Bios

**p. 103** Submission Guidelines



**STATUTE OF LOVE**

Rachel Tramonte

Poetry

Paint for love.

Cast for love.

Scan, stir, search

Dig, drive, scale

Pain, fear, fire

Fire + pain

No one. No body. No mind.

Gets out of love free.

## THE SMALLEST COLOR

Michael Mackin O'Mara

Poetry

*"Show me the lines of your hand.**From where have you come?**Are you sure you are not dead?"*

— Ilse Jeurgensen

in spring the conspiracy of seed and rain renews  
above it they scale a gneissic face to escape an empty  
bed

these hands know this chunk of mountain as intimately

as a thousand lovers' skin  
climbing last loves, last all-niters, hugging the rough  
slab

in spring the conversation of wind and leaves resumes  
they've found someone other than the one once sought  
letters cease—thaw to lost remembering's

there is a last time for everything  
though we seldom know it then

in spring you'll love another (everywhere others will love  
others)

in the breeze of entangling nights, in the brisk afterbirth  
of dawning,  
in plainness of light and heat

such hope born of hope blooms or not  
without it, how do you live?

in green and softening earth

in new life and mute shale  
in spring

**ON THESE NIGHTS**  
Michael Mackin O'Mara  
Poetry

at the end of spring  
when orange blossoms dream  
from grievous gardens and we dream  
from the burrows of our empty beds

at the end of summer  
when sweat mingles with sweat  
and each lover's salt  
burns in the mouths of new wounds

at the end of autumn  
when the hunter's moon, sweeping  
the low horizon, tracks us home  
through yarrow sticks of bare treetops

at the end of memory  
when the north wind numbers our bones  
the delicious fête of pain goes on  
with or without us, on

**My Father's Fruit Stand**

Jack Donahue

Poetry

He always wanted to open one,  
with juicy cherries for sale,  
thin blood running down the line,  
hard pits spit to the ground,  
stems that connect each one of us  
to the other of us,  
yanked through gritted teeth,  
one satisfied customer after another  
with cash stuck in their pockets.

Oranges too, with thick rinds  
over papery veins that contain  
the ulcerous acid  
that turns our insides out.

Bananas would be available, in season  
bunches of them, phallic, yellow  
with spoil spots scooped out  
and plopped into the compost pile.

Add lurious grapes, green, red, easily bled  
onto the bottom rack of pineapples, succulent, showy,  
prickly at times, crowns plucked for readiness.

It is time, at this ripe old age  
to plan the enterprise of a simple life,  
to invest in his dream of sour lemons  
and fragrant lime displayed  
in parade day precision.

It is time to open a stand in his memory,  
to plant it on a busy corner in the old neighborhood.  
Remember him? What can he produce?

Let's have his special fruit drop from heaven  
to feed all those who looked the other way  
as his carcass was picked clean  
by well-dressed vultures  
and multitudes of ravenous crows.

## OF TWO WORLDS

Alexandra Balasa

Fiction

“There are a few things you need to know before we start,” Nurse Lazareanu translated, looking at Ovidiu over her golden-rimmed glasses. The doctor blabbed on in broken American English, swallowing his words like he had a mouthful of *sarmale*. “Firstly, the medication has a number of gastrointestinal side effects. It’s important that you keep a strict diet while taking it. Nothing sour or pickled — ”

“*Ca naiba!*” Ovidiu snapped. “How am I supposed to swallow my daughter-in-law’s dry American cooking without a pickle to smooth the way down?”

Doctor *Jawn-sawn* or whatever his name was frowned. The nurse cradled her clipboard against her chest. “Mr. Nastase, a dietary change is a small price to pay for relief from your hallucinations.”

Ovidiu’s eyes slid to the most recent portal; it had appeared while Doctor Sarmale-in-Mouth had introduced himself. No more than a vague distortion in the air, skewing the lines of everything behind it, multi-coloured edges making it look like a soap-bubble. The longer he looked, the more the world within unfolded. A river as vast as Ovidiu’s beloved Danube, flanked by forest-carpeted peaks that filled his nostrils with crisp Carpathian air. Fields of lavender stretched along the foothills. He tightened his grip on his walker’s foam-padded handles, forcing his gaze back to the nurse.

“Look, Nurse Lazareanu — ”

“Please, call me Catalina,” the elderly nurse said with a smile.

“Catalina,” he relented, “My hallucinations serve me

just fine. You can tell Mr. *Jawn-sawn* that my portals don't hurt anyone. If one pops up that I like, I enter it. If I don't care for what's inside, I don't. What's wrong with that?"

"It is an unhealthy coping mechanism, Mr. Nastase. I understand that you miss Romania, but when your mind travels into these so-called 'portals,' you enter a catatonic state that can last for hours. You must understand why this worries your family."

Ovidiu's attention wandered to the portal again. He licked lips curling around empty gums. Hopefully the crone would stop talking before this portal closed; it looked far more tempting than the sterile, white-plaster walls and sedative-like calm of the psychiatric ward. In fact, it was more like Romania than any portal he'd seen so far. The Romania he'd once been so desperate to escape, that his very bones now ached to revisit. "Okay, give me the pills and let's get on with this," he said. "I'm ready to be discharged."

Catalina exchanged a few guttural words with the doctor. She turned back to Ovidiu with a puckered expression. "Unfortunately, your son has refused to sign for your release against the doctor's recommendation. You will remain here for a few months, under observation. We'll be monitoring your reaction to the medication as well as your diet."

Ovidiu slammed his walker against the floor. "Damn the day I thought to have children! I'm well enough to sign for my own release. And no way in hell you're taking my pickles! The communists took our rights and our passports, but goddammit, we always had pickles!"

Dr. Sarmale muttered something to Catalina (he guessed something like, "you handle the old bat; I have other patients to tend to") and left the room with a

conciliatory smile at Ovidiu. Invoking the doctor's mother and Easter under his breath, Ovidiu pushed his walker past Catalina, slippers sticky against the scrubbed linoleum. He moved towards the portal.

"Where are you going, Mr. Nastase?" Catalina asked in a guarded voice.

"I'm getting out of here one way or another." He'd told the *securitate* the same thing, years ago. The next day money had changed hands and he'd stolen aboard a cargo ship with his son, docking safely in Akçakoca, Turkey. He'd tasted freedom at the expense of his homeland. That freedom had long turned to ash in his mouth.

"Retreating into your mental world won't help things." She held out a bag full of round, yellow pellets.

Ovidiu scowled. Being caged did something to a man, made him forget his humanity and lash out. Under the communists, escape had meant the western world. In an American psychiatric ward, what else could it mean, but a retreat into his own mind? He sighed, rubbing a hand over his liver-spotted pate. "Will the medication make *you* go away?"

"You need to train your mind to overcome this form of escapism. The portals are only manifestations of your desires. They aren't real."

"You don't see religious nuts locked in psychiatric wards, and I'll be damned if God isn't a manifestation of people's desires!"

Catalina raised her hands in a conciliatory gesture. "Look, you simply cannot be of two worlds."

Ovidiu closed his eyes. His town-home in Sibiu branded the insides of his eyelids, tugging at his heartstrings. Its pull seemed to tear his spirit from his body. His eyes fluttered open and the harsh reality of

the hospital eased back into focus. But it was no more real to him than his portal was to Catalina. Lavender-scented wind breathed over his face as he stepped into the reality of his choosing.

END

**Underneath**  
Suzanne O'Connell  
Poetry

Under the flesh of Wilshire Blvd.,  
while digging the new subway,  
they found an Ice-Age mammoth skull.  
Centuries later, it waits,  
eyes like empty fishbowls,  
majestic tusks  
raised skyward.

My tires rolled over that very spot,  
bruised the soil, didn't know  
that bones underneath flinched.  
Seasons changed.

Thoughtless leaves mulched the asphalt.  
Summer's children rode bikes,  
war protesters marched with placards,  
homeless people pushed carts,  
food trucks selling kimchi burritos  
traveled over,  
never knowing what was down there.

Under my own flesh,  
a brain artery could pop.  
A bunch of bad cells could copulate.  
There could be chemo and other nasty stuff.  
Or, I could be broadsided during a green light.  
A crazy dictator could push the red button.  
There could be a tax audit, the poorhouse, maybe.  
Or my husband could realize he's attracted to men.  
I ask you. How do we go on,  
with all the danger lurking underneath?

**The Vegetarian and the Liar**

Suzanne O'Connell

Poetry

“Me too!” I said.  
Why did I lie to her face?  
It’s true I don’t eat red meat,  
but that doesn’t mean I’m a vegetarian.

I didn’t have the heart to amend my blurted answer.  
She seemed so excited to meet someone  
from the food group sisterhood.

We were at a conference,  
sitting under the dining tent eating lunch.  
Lawnmowers buzzed around us.  
My salad tasted like motor fuel and regret.

“And tonight for dinner,” she told me,  
“be sure to ask the food lady for the special stuff  
she keeps in the back — black beans and quinoa,  
corn tortillas and stuff.”  
“I sure will!” I said. So slippery,

my lie slid out before I had time to reconsider.  
It made me think of all the millions of other lies,  
wonder if there was a pattern to them.

Lies,  
even minor ones about a lack of dietary ethics,  
always have consequences.  
Now, every time she’s around for meals,  
I only eat the buckwheat and hummus,  
not the fried chicken I really want.

**THE STALE GINGER ALE**

Marc Tretin

Poetry

that once did miraculously effervesce  
still believes in God despite its smallest bubbles  
having burst. Thinking in froth caused it to obsess.  
From the counter, it looks upon the stubbly  
plain carpet, furniture of spare teak,  
and prays carbon dioxide breaks its waterline.  
Condemned to stay at room temperature,  
capable only of maintaining faith  
if there's a contract with God's signature,  
it has no choice but to stay in place.  
Time makes God's absence as transparent  
as ginger ale, no longer effervescent.

## THE WIRE HANGARS

Marc Tretin

Poetry

are tired of speculating upon  
the cloning of rows of minimalist  
skeletons, some with dry cleaner's coupons  
and tags, all striving to be formalists,  
with platonic triangles with a hook-  
shaped question mark around the horizontal  
rod, suspended by the slimmest wiry crook.  
The clothing draped on them is incidental  
to their drive to have naked metal trysts  
that cause a clattering in closed closets.  
A clutter of them in an all-enveloping twisted-  
up mass, willy-nilly deposit  
themselves on the floor as they attempt to caress  
each other, though in the main they're bodiless.

**THE TENNIS BALL GONE SOFT AND STILL DEFATING**

Marc Tretin

Poetry

Wants to be told  
if he is going to die.  
He can hear air escaping  
causing him to lie flat  
against the floor, but he's not  
sure that this is permanent.  
He wants to be told.

Once he served aces and winning  
drop shots, but also mistakenly rolled  
across the court. Now useless,  
without spin or pop, he wants  
forgiveness — or is it meaning? —  
to comfort him. An airless half-globe  
whose smudged fuzz demeans  
his sport, these few words  
could frame his epitaph:

To be ordinary is to be  
neglected for doing  
what is difficult and  
expected.

**Navigation**  
Ailey O'Toole  
Poetry

*after Dorothy Allison*

This year, I did not go crazy.  
Despite the heartbreak, the  
failure, the bills, the hospitals,  
the brother in jail. I did not  
go crazy, but rather, spoke  
to the universe as an old friend —  
“please, please be gentle with me.”  
The universe whispered back,  
“No.” But still, I did not go  
crazy. I ran across streets, told  
my secrets to people in checkout  
lines, burnt my mother’s chili,  
loved people who could never  
love me back. I ran right up  
to the edge and danced along it,  
but I did not go crazy. No matter  
how hard the universe pushed, no  
matter how much I hurt, no matter  
how badly I wanted to. I looked at  
the fires blazing through my life, and  
I did not back down. I weaved my  
way around them, maneuvering  
safely past every searing plume.  
I did not go crazy. But I wore  
very, very close to the bone.

**Invertebrates**

Judy Darley

Fiction

We dug her up each solstice, and each time she was a little lighter, her joints a little more unhinged. I worried she might come apart entirely, sinew and bones giving way as we propped her in the place of honor.

My brother and I allowed the invertebrates that had made her their home to attend our celebrations too. Sometimes centipedes fell from her eye-sockets and throat cavity to roam among the feast. I watched beetles nestle into her breastbone, and recalled how comfortably my head once rested there.

I took care to check every forkful for wriggles before raising it to my mouth. Spiders laced webs over the bread rolls, but they weren't for eating anyway.

It was harder earlier on, when remnants of flesh still clung to her ribs. The stench of rot invaded my nostrils till I could barely swallow the roast lamb, potatoes and beans that my brother had prepared.

Now her scent was of earthy loam — far more palatable.

I wondered if the change in smell meant she was fully departed at last, and we'd soon be able to leave her in peace.

My brother was the one who'd insisted on this ritual — our biannual commemoration of the captor we'd almost come to love.

We crooned the lullabies and folk songs she'd woven through our childhoods, and I recited the poems and parables she'd taught me. I remembered how I used to squirm in her lap when I was small, seeking the comfort of her heat whenever I missed our mum.

My brother raised a glass and we toasted the woman who'd caged us, protected us, tried to fatten us. Candle flames shivered on their wicks, and her skull gleamed like the moon, faint fissures mirroring lunar seas. The cracks were stained black from the fire we'd burnt her in.

Before dawn came we carried her back to the forest and the grave we'd interred, breaking up the bread rolls as we went — a symbolic reminder of the trail of crumbs that had failed to lead us home.

We tucked in limb and digit, layering on the soil till she was covered. I made sure we buried each insect and worm with her in the rich, dark earth.

When we turned to leave, duty complete for another six months, I felt relief unwind in my spine.

**SIRJE SETS THE TOWN ON FIRE**

Christopher Kuhl

Poetry

she didn't

speak English

but she knew the language  
that mattered

she was a foreign knockout

and while the boys  
were ogling her

sunning on the rocks

she was saying

in a wordless language  
*come here, boys*—arching  
her back—*you boys in white T-shirts  
and tight Levis  
come**and I teach you**the syntax of sex*

**Mary Quite Contrary**

Jack D. Harvey

Poetry

Mary's passion,  
contrary to  
the popular old poem,  
was not garden, it was  
a Harley-Davidson's  
hard saddle  
under her ass.

Sitting astride it,  
riding, riding  
nowhere and  
the only garden's silver bells  
and cockleshells were  
tattooed on her arms.

Mother Goose, you should tell it so,  
hard and true to the times  
and leave the prissy miss  
where you found her.

**WHAT I WANT TO KNOW**

Donna L. Emerson

Poetry

The gravel beds are gone  
to build our homes and bridges  
where the gray and pink fish  
used to lay their eggs.

The shadowy inlets  
where the salmon rested  
have been straightened out.

What I want to know is,  
when the last Coho salmon  
are placed in their streams,  
can they get back home?

And if these sleek fish know  
only hatchery life, they've lost  
their navigational compass anyway.

When my daughter's fourth grade class  
visited the Iron Gate hatchery,  
the girls could only cry and hold  
their stomachs, watching the men squeeze  
the Coho's abdomen for eggs,  
then toss her into a chute.

What I want to know is why France can  
separate waterways for fish and wineries  
while we mix all together,  
ensuring salmon's decline?

The Pomo say  
they never taught their salmon  
to climb ladders.

LAST CLASS  
Donna L. Emerson  
Poetry

They come to school early.  
Morning coffee, jibes, and jokes,  
out of cars they drive in the dark from Vallejo,  
and Monte Rio, where the river flooded.  
Slipping out of county safe houses, the bus  
from Cloverdale, or out of cars they live in.

Out of wanting to get ahead,  
out of time, no longer content to be behind,  
out of start over and finish this time,  
out of *I want to be like you.*

Half of my last class stays late.  
Questions about the lecture, their futures, musty  
pasts, today's test. *Was it good enough?*

This class knows how to listen, willing to learn  
a different way from before, to stretch from the  
beginning  
and see it through to the end.  
They take another assignment and do it.  
They all finish first.

My students weave their term stories of disabled  
people  
with their own lives. More than half tell tales of those  
who win.  
The rest are tortured, shot, commit suicide. Culturally  
normal  
for disability in the 17th or 18th centuries.

Tears slip down my cheeks as we reach the last minutes of the last day, as students stand in line, in a single file, hold my hands in both of theirs.

They shake my hand the way we practiced in class,  
hand me homemade cards or store-bought ones they  
hardly can  
*afford, will you write me a reference?*  
a packet of morning glories, a book of poetry,  
*how will I be able to reach you?*  
lotions for my winter skin, gift cards for *My Teacher.*

**HOLLOW BODY**

Barbara Tramonte

Poetry

There is no solace for me  
My landscape explodes in loss  
I am melted by the sheer force  
Of that day I found you sagging  
In the chair.

Touch. Shake.  
Hollow body. Tiger become rug  
Cowhide; shoe  
Now I am all alone  
There are no more comparisons  
Just the finality of death  
And my dull gaze at what I see.

**SOLITUDE**  
Barbara Tramonte  
Poetry

Now that you can't walk  
I don't shout, "Come here."  
That mole I see munching the  
dahlias and rudbeckia in back  
won't be seen in a rush  
to the window.  
The cardinal, like a fire truck,  
only belongs to a minute.  
I've learned to gag the urge,  
"Come quick!"

I am rehearsing for solitude  
I see but I don't tell.

Our union is brief  
embedded in a long caesura  
of solitary confinement.  
Gone but not erased.

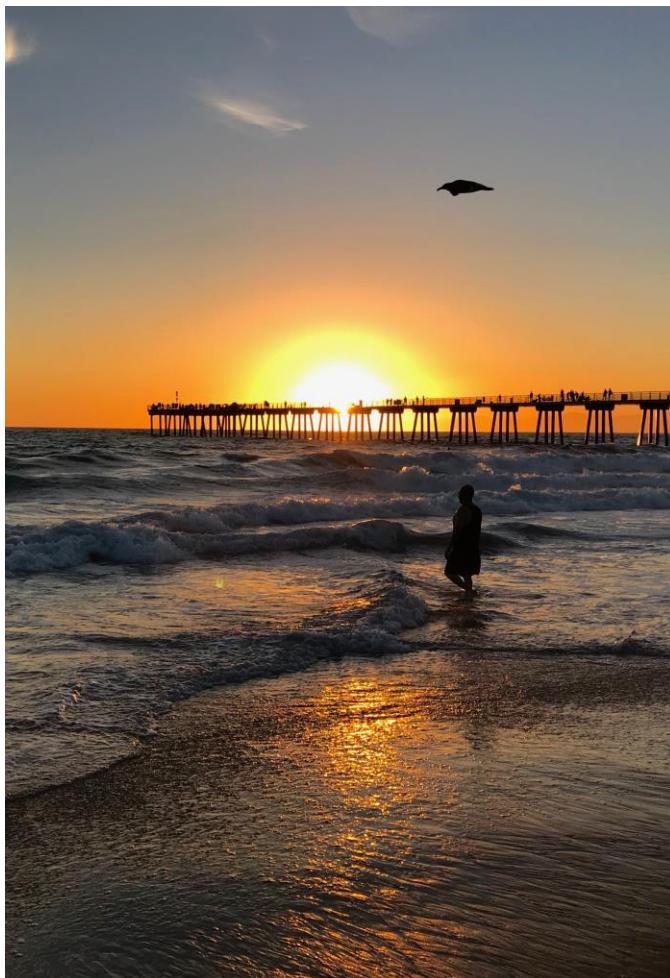
**COULD WE BE THE SAME?**

Barbara Tramonte

Poetry

Could we be the same two people  
who took a canteen, it leaked,  
got on a plane  
went to San Francisco,  
got off the plane  
with no place to live,  
Rice Krispies and sardines  
in our suitcase  
Oh! and a five-year-old child.  
Could we be the same two people  
who huddled together,  
so broke,  
that hot coffee and frozen  
spinach  
meant lunch and dinner.  
We were so happy then!  
There was so much we believed.  
There is nothing to believe now  
and not enough time to be fooled.

**Hermosa Beach Sunset**  
Cameron Rogers  
Art



**IN WINTER, I WILL GRIEVE FOR HER**

Dana Robbins

Poetry

In Florida, above the highway, a vortex  
of black starlings, dozens maybe hundreds,  
swirl in the wind like charred scraps  
of paper, like Hebrew letters that burn,  
then rise toward heaven in a Hasidic tale.

My husband turns on the car radio, as if  
all is normal, as if his mother is not dying.  
Oh, Selma, gentle lady of the fluttering  
laugh, the kind word, the giving hands,  
the elegant clothes found on sale,

now she has grown thin as a sparrow  
in winter, I will grieve for her but loss  
will not take me by surprise. I have met death  
before, know how the shadow falls across a face.  
They move her to hospice yet still my husband says,

“Ma, you’re doin’ great,” as if saying will make it so,  
but I know her heart muscle lies quivering  
in the bird cage of her chest, and I can see the letters  
of her name flame and rise up, born on the wind  
of her ragged breath.

**LIKE A FREIGHT TRAIN**

Dana Robbins

Poetry

Passenger trains — with names like The Phoebe Snow, The Owl, The New York Mail — made their last ride through New Jersey in 1961, leaving only freight trains. The brick station house was abandoned.

*This is a secret way*, my sister said, as we scrambled down the hill through the long grass, darted across the railroad tracks, then came up the other side, no faster than walking across the bridge but more exciting.

1969, my sister left home for forbidden paths as the seventies reverberated like a freight train through my teenage soul. I searched for her in the light of joints shared with friends in the empty depot, our secret hideaway, which vibrated as the Erie-Lackawanna thundered by in the dark.

## FEET: A LOVE STORY

Dana Robbins

Poetry

I remember his mother's sharp feet sheathed in tiny pumps,  
little Hungarian feet for dancing, bold feet for running:  
standing on the back steps, chin forward, shoulders back, she smiled at me, *Ze iz zo prettee*,  
then turned to him with a torrent, *Zee! Zee! Zee!*

Sharp syllables like her pointed feet.

*My mother escaped from the Nazis*, he told me,  
*they were marching them somewhere, she ran away*  
*and hid in the tall grass.*

Short and very tough, he could barely read, was bad in school, and made everyone laugh.

How could I resist the tenderness of a boy who was always in trouble? When I first kissed him, I looked into his slanted green eyes, eyes of Magyar, as if I had never seen eyes before, as if I had never known there was such a thing as eyes.

*You remind me of my brother*, he said, between kisses, *he's smart too*. My sweater was itchy on his bare chest, would I mind?

I threw off the good girl with my clothing, feasted on the freedom of flesh on flesh,

breathed his warm sour dough smell, put my virgin hand around the red stalk that rose from a dark nest. After, we gorged ourselves on deli meats.

For years, I associated liverwurst with lust.  
The only time I saw his mother coddle him  
  
was after a rumble in school; then I found him  
on the throne of a backyard lounge chair,  
in the sweet American sunshine, his injured foot  
propped proudly on a pillow, and I wondered  
why she wasn't angry.

He winked, *The fucker said something about Hitler*. As I remember his body against mine,  
I see her, tall grass and insects tickling her nose,  
holding her breath, as she watched the bare feet  
of the other prisoners march into the distance.

**WHAT DOES THE MOON KNOW**

Eva-Maria Sher

Poetry

The lake, like hammered silk, reflects light.  
In matters of love, consider the sky.

You may climb the tree of your choosing. You may send  
your own fire into the world. But who will dress

the wounded? You may sing the season of summer,  
write the blessings of daffodils. But who can guess

the pure evil that arrives at noon? The moon does not  
care

if you sit under the tree of awe. He does not care

about wisdom. You may dance among descendants  
of demons. You may drown in your own ashes.

The moon, who sang you lullabies night after night—  
offers only shadow-footprints at the edge of sand.

You may have felt the hidden rubies pulsing,  
you may have heard the call of the owl for his mate,

but what does the moon know about love or war  
—the night-whispers of geese?

**NEAREST EXIT**

Eva-Maria Sher

Poetry

Torrential rain, the traffic's slow  
A lorry turns into your lane.  
Its painted rear-door proudly states:  
YOUR FINAL MILE  
WE GUARANTEE  
IS OUR FIRST PRIORITY.

A week ago you surfed  
the wake already  
of that fateful vehicle.  
A hint from God?  
Your musing mind climbs  
Into that truck, discovers caskets

Counts them, stack on stack.  
You're out of air, you're out of luck!  
That goddam truck is taking you—  
O MILE OF COLD FINALITY—  
Against your will up a steep hill  
Toward the Lone-Pine Cemetery!

You look into the nearest box:  
Shimmer of rose-gray, melon, dawn.  
How silky-soft the pillow edged  
With lace! The urge is strong.  
You settle in. Your cheek's pressed  
Into comfort, when—rolling past a

Church of God — you glimpse the sign  
That wakes you from your reverie:

THE EXTRA MILE, you read  
IS NEVER CROWDED, and—  
Considering this newest hint  
you find that you agree.

You take the nearest exit—let  
PRIORITIES pass by.  
Clouds part. You check your  
rear view mirror, roll down  
your window: the wind brings news  
of honeysuckle and wild rose.

**GRASS**  
Alison Hicks  
Poetry

It grows easily, everywhere,  
not always the way we want.

We bring in soil to even out the dips,  
spread new seed while the weather's temperate.

Weeds blow, seed in.  
Oniongrass and ground ivy are bad influences.

Cut it too short, the roots won't sustain  
when it gets hot and dry.

Let it grow and it will be wild,  
not fit for get-togethers or barbecues.

Everyone's a critic, whether they say so or not.  
How well have we tended our creation?

Have we neglected what we should have dealt with?  
Have we over-fertilized?

One midsummer afternoon,  
passing more quickly than we could have thought,

it will shine green and lush until twilight,  
drawing on the earth where it is planted.

May we live to see it.

**SEA OTTER**

Alison Hicks

Poetry

Thicker than seal, denser than mink,  
the fur for which you hunted us almost to extinction.

You celebrate our survival as your success,  
stuff fabric likenesses for your young.

Approaching our rafts, you judge our lives,  
undemanding;  
how pleasant to wrap oneself in kelp and ride the  
waves.

You forget our sharp teeth and our drudgery.  
Our omnivore metabolism's drive.

We carry no blubber, less body fat than you.  
We must dive and dive and dive.

A quarter of our body weight a day, consumed.  
Squid, abalone, urchin, whatever we can find.

And after, groom, each hair precisely arrayed.  
Skin exposed is death.

We've been to the bottom and felt its offerings.  
We, like you, must surface.

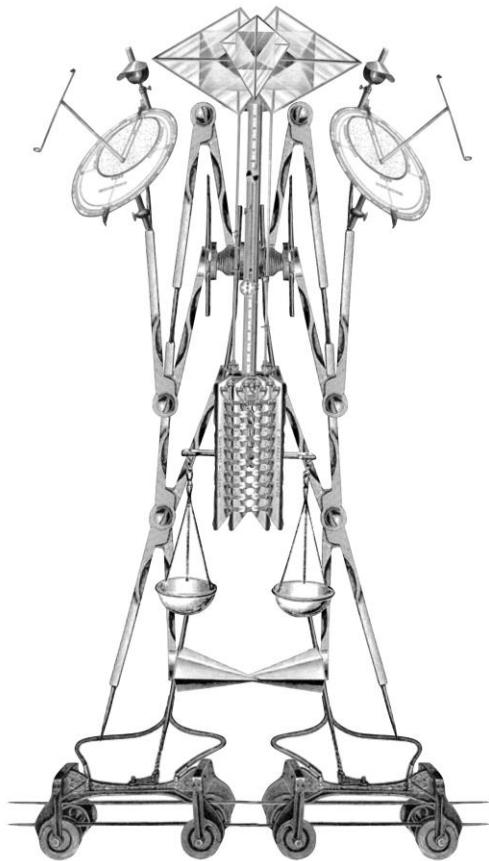
**LOBSTERS**  
Marty Carlock  
Poetry

How much do they know  
stacked one carapace on another  
angular and mottled  
eyes and feelers forward in the  
deli vitrine  
they lie and watch, resigned  
only one lifts her robot legs and moves  
making an idle bubble  
do they know they  
are already as good as dead.

**Another Interrupted Dream**

Bill Wolak

Art



**HOW TO SYNTHESIZE A SON**

Victor Altshul

Poetry

Carefully drawing on my pipette,  
I prepare to assemble the vital elements,  
trembling lest I repeat the disaster  
of that summer in the chemistry lab,

when all yellow products had turned blue  
and all blue products had turned yellow  
and the instructor gave me a passing mark  
so as not to have to see me in the fall.

Attend to detail, though details may confuse;  
I'll settle for the opacity of the solution,  
for acidity balanced with a basic sweetness —  
for the many shades of yellow and of blue.

## CUZCO

Victor Altshul

Poetry

Visiting that marvelous place, so alive,  
it would help to be younger than I am.  
Don't misunderstand me —  
I'm not trying to make excuses.  
But you have to admit it's hard to enjoy  
Peru's multicolored, dancing city

that hovers eleven thousand feet or more  
above the dark green Amazon basin,  
where macaws and parrots  
try to drown out sloths and marmosets  
with wild shouts of narcissistic glee,

when you can't gulp down enough air  
to make it to the next corner,  
much less to the shop three blocks away,  
where Quechuan tapestries' dark reds and greens  
would take away what little breath  
might linger inside your heaving lungs,

tapestries far lovelier, I must admit,  
than those woven by an old friend  
I need to tell you about. Poor fellow.  
Spidery fibers crisscross his shriveled lungs  
and garrote his tiny air sacs with heartless precision.  
I see him gasp and waste away,  
compelled to heave for breath when he should eat.

I was just about to say  
I can't bear to see the lines

of worry on his forehead  
as he looks at me looking at him  
and forgets about his own drowning chest  
for the few seconds he can manage:  
so terribly concerned, or so I imagine,

with *my* desperation,  
with *my* miserable, hopeless wish  
to give him one of my healthy lungs,  
which I want to believe I can reinflate forever,  
with every blessed breath,  
to a pink and healthy cluster of clean air sacs,  
if only I go to the gym each day  
and mount those clever machines  
and huff and puff with sufficient force  
to persuade myself I am still breathing.

**Avocado**  
Warren Glover  
Poetry

Its prehistoric skin  
Rough textured and green  
Sits and waits, like an alligator  
Patient and still

To tackle an avocado  
You need a knife.  
You are the hunter  
Of the riches that lie within  
The flavour and the fats  
(they are good ones!)

But beware the stone  
Lying at the heart of the fruit  
Treat it with respect  
Plant it, and in twenty years  
You'll have your own avocado tree

If you're lucky enough to deserve it

**The Breakup**

Katherine Nazzaro

Poetry

The end doesn't come with the slam of a door —  
nothing has snapped suddenly,  
breaking off with jagged edges.  
This was a sugar cube in hot water —  
something that was supposed to be comforting.  
Something that dissolved slowly,  
over time,  
until there's just the trace of what once was.

**Exit Strategy**  
Akpa Arinzechukwu  
Poetry

The city walls fold into amusement arcades.  
The polar jerks. Roses cuss. Everyone is going my way  
but slower.

Lilies wither. It isn't evening yet. Beds scoff.  
Everyone's voice sounds like yours.

Allen Avenue. The wild boys on the street  
Want a taste. I give them your shirt.

The city walls melt into pockets. You are in my pocket.  
I carry my depression wherever I go.

If you were Diana Ross performing  
Would I jump onto the stage to weep at your feet?

Would you kick me out or have the guards bounce me?  
Seaweeds make it to my table. I am always eating you.

Toll Gate. All the commuters think they're Gods.  
I drive my anxiety wherever I go.

You are in my pocket. Everyone's voice sounds like  
yours.  
I give your shoes to the boy who cried wolf.

I give him a head too. I give him a stare. Give him a fuck  
you.  
Trash him. Cunt-call him, sorry, I don't feel bad.

The city walls fold into amusement arcades.  
The cherry nods to the tapping of the wind. I can't hear  
you.

When I think about my depression think about my  
anxiety  
Think about ghosts, I see you always.

The polar jerks. I am driving back to the villa.  
The boys have turned your shirt into a rag.

Your shoes are now worn & deserted at the Welfare.  
It is dark. The incense glows. I am circling right back to  
the villa.

The room is as we left it; post-apocalyptic. The machine  
plays your voice.  
I am alive for the moment. The polar bows, you aren't  
here.

The dusts can't be mine.

**Not a Novena to Saints Catherine of Siena & Felicitas  
of Rome**

Akpa Arinzechukwu

Poetry

Them boys started falling off broken prayers.  
Them boys wore black  
And them prayers were a locksmith's secret safe.

I have forgotten how to be human. I am a macaw  
clowning Macau.  
That year during the funeral of Lao whom no one ever  
saw,

The Tao priests predicted grave-spots but his spirit was  
never caught.  
As a macaw nobody kisses me. I worry about the trees I  
autographed:

Depression, loss, anxiety, hopelessness, black coffee, &  
the other  
Things in between.

A prayer is not a necklace. Someone I once knew  
kneaded me one, though.  
But then it wouldn't have been a necklace since we had  
no necks

And God lived with the humans. Them boys wore black.  
I wear your skin.  
I worry about the cities we flew over, the walls,  
rooftops & beacons

We shit-painted. Lao was of a good heart.

I am thinking about them boys who were caught in  
between

Vaginas and living. My brother lived for only two hours.  
Winehouse stuttered on stage, grinned & grinned, fell  
over —

Concertgoers cussed but the party was over. The Tao is  
mysterious.

There's a fine line between praying & being prayed to:

You unburden, straddled right down with a thousand  
burdens.

But Lao was a fine gentleman. Mothers wouldn't have  
to cry

Over tombstones. They are cradling their own, they're  
washing

The link between darkness & light, they weave prayers  
at the

Hour of labour but newborns rarely drink coffees not  
made of laughter.

Them boys wore black. I wear your skin. My little  
brother taught us

How to muddy laughter & how not to say this is my  
own.

Every prayer them boys owned back then slid into the  
air,

Never journeyed back home. There's a fine line  
between being a bird  
& a birdsong. You aim at the birds, they bruise your

heart.

**Crystals (a Shadorma)**

F.I. Goldhaber

Poetry

Sun reflects  
off water droplets  
clinging to  
bare branches,  
transforming raindrops into  
crystal adornments.

**Blood Moon**  
F.I. Goldhaber  
Poetry

Full moon flames orange  
in smoke from spreading wildfires,  
warning us to flee.

**Special Delivery**  
Eileen M. Cunniffe  
Nonfiction

We've all been there, right? You've just stepped out of the shower, there's a great song on the radio, and no one else is home. Of course you're going to sing along, maybe even do a little dance as you towel off and comb your wet hair. Your husband's at work, your kids are at school, and you feel like letting go just a little. In fact, maybe you're going to keep on singing and dancing even as you leave the bathroom and wander — no longer wrapped in a towel — into the bedroom, and wriggle into your black big-girl panties (think *Bridget Jones's Diary*) and your best black bra. And let's say maybe, just maybe, you're going to sing so loudly that your singing drowns out the sound of a Fed Ex delivery truck making its way down your long, steep driveway and coming to a stop directly outside your first-floor bedroom window, where the shade is up to let the May sunshine in because nobody, but nobody, ever drives down that steep hill unexpectedly.

Let's say the only eye contact you make with the Fed Ex driver — although you will sign for the package he is there to deliver — is through that window, while you are still mostly undressed. He is so close to you — simply by virtue of where he has parked his truck — that there is no denying he has seen you. You cannot pretend no one is home, and neither can he. So you lock eyes, ever so briefly, in spite of yourselves. And then all you can do, while he fumbles for his clipboard, double-checks the address and noisily slides open the door of his truck to find your package, is drop to the floor, roll toward your closet and start grabbing at the hems of

clothes. You are hoping to find something modest, like maybe a thick turtleneck sweater and your baggiest sweatpants. When the doorbell rings, you somehow have the presence of mind to turn down the volume on the radio, and then walk, as calmly as you can (which is not very calmly at all) to the front door, suppressing an urge to trill “Who is it?” as you reluctantly reach for the doorknob.

What would you do with this story, if it happened to you?

Well, if you were my sister Amy, you would manage, sort of, to keep your composure as you signed for that package, without ever looking directly at the delivery man. Then you would go back into your bedroom, pull all the shades all the way down, and collapse onto your bed in a ridiculous heap of mortified laughter. After a few minutes, you would take off the clothes you’d scrambled into, go back into the bathroom and generously reapply your deodorant, and then put on the clothes you had intended to wear that morning — a dark ensemble, since you were heading to a funeral, which explains the black undergarments. (The funeral is not for someone you were close to, as should be obvious, but for the husband of your son’s school bus driver.)

And then you would pause for a moment and think to yourself, “Thank goodness we have a girls’ weekend planned. I can’t wait to tell my sisters and my mother *this* story.”

We did indeed have a girls’ weekend planned, shortly after Amy’s close encounter with the Fed Ex driver. Our sister Angie was turning 50, and along with Mom, Amy’s twin sister Jen, me and a couple of Angie’s close friends, we were driving to Amy’s home — a

mountain retreat in Maryland — to celebrate. Amy's husband was taking the kids to visit his parents that weekend (wise man), so we had the whole lovely house to ourselves, and with a couple of extra air mattresses, way too much food and assorted adult beverages, we were set for some fun. And fun we had, especially after Amy told us her Fed Ex story on the first night we were there. We laughed ourselves silly, just imagining what she'd been through and how she'd felt.

But the best fun came in the days following our girls' weekend. Because on the way home, Jen and I cooked up a wicked plan while Angie and Mom dozed in the backseat. We decided that we would each have to — just to be polite — send Amy thank-you notes for being such a wonderful hostess. It was (almost) common courtesy. It had (almost) nothing to do with that long-ago sisters' weekend, when Amy had arrived first, checked in for all of us, and short-sheeted the beds in the room Jen and I were sharing.

So on the following Tuesday morning, when someone unexpectedly rang Amy's doorbell, she thought it was very funny that I'd sent her a thank-you note, via Fed Ex.

On Wednesday, she began to sense a pattern when she got a note from Jen, again delivered by FedEx. The driver — who was never the same one who'd made that first delivery and who apparently had asked for a new route, perhaps in another state — asked if they were buying a house or something, with so much overnight mail. Amy just shook her head and answered, "No, that's not it."

By Thursday she was ready. Mom's thank-you note and Angie's arrived together, and Amy laughed and laughed when she heard that at the Mail Boxes Etc.

store Angie had been told there were in fact cheaper options available for overnight shipping, but she had insisted on using Federal Express.

**RACE DAY: ADVICE FROM A CROSS-COUNTRY PARENT**

Laura C. Wendorff

Poetry

*for Sam and his teammates*

Run your eye  
down the starting line  
and notice the gradation  
of color, the tenseness  
of muscle, the composed  
and calculating faces.  
Now look into your heart  
and begin.

Watch as bodies jerk, sprint,  
and bolt beside you.  
Observe as bare arms and legs rotate,  
as torsos of red, black, green, and white  
cascade down field,  
circle and swirl past,  
a kaleidoscope against brown prairie grass.

Turn inward as your spikes grab turf,  
your pores drip and pour  
salt in eyes and mouth.  
Keep your knees high,  
now uphill—  
get after it!

Block out sound of crowd,  
coach, and parents.  
Block out autumnal colors—red maples,  
yellow oaks, brown grass, and blue sky.

Don't think that the sky is so blue  
you could swim in it.

Find the zone.  
Breathe and breathe.  
Find the body ahead of you.  
Is your heart big enough?

Dash, dart, lurch, and hurtle forward.  
Into the mix and elbows out!  
Jab and  
regain your stride.

Put your kick on,  
channel your inner Mo Farah.  
Pass a teammate—  
*Sorry!*  
Pass a competitor—  
*Loser!*

You've got this.  
*You have*  
*got this.*  
Stretch, lean, pitch yourself forward—  
and finish.

Drink in water  
and jubilation:  
Now is the time to  
swim in the sky.

**LETTER**

Shawna Ervin

Poetry

This letter is stained  
with orange marmalade.

Words lay crumpled  
in the trash, crumbs.

This letter may be burned,  
the fire dangerous, close.

This letter is the echo  
of your whimper, your weakness. It has the shape

of your back in it, the rounded slump  
of your shadow, the whoosh  
of your limp leaving

me. I drag my nails across my legs, wait  
for the skin to throb.

This letter tastes like rage.  
This letter is nothing.

**Becoming Superman**

Trevor Pyle

Poetry

Yes, yes — it helps to have a cape  
red as a bullfighter's *muleta*,  
an S with swooping curves  
stamped on your chest  
but all that's required is a fierce hope  
one that broils behind your eyes,  
jams a fork in the outlet of your mind  
the kind of hope that leads  
to hands bloodied and nicked,  
a voice scratched and hoarse.

A Buick groans as you lift it toward the sky.

You feel a tug at your neck.  
A crimson shape flutters behind you  
like a shroud that's been cast away.

**BRISTLECONE PINE**

Lynn Hoggard

Poetry

*—Sawmill Park, Wheeler Peak Wilderness, NM*

At ten thousand feet, where most trees reel, then bend and die, you're five thousand years and holding — maybe the world's oldest organism.

You thrive in places others cannot live, alchemizing phosphoric and alkaline soils through your shallow, wide-branching roots, sealing out insects with your resinous bark.

You'll die for centuries in tiny parts, eroding like a mountain of gray stone, trunk gnarled and twisted from the fierce assaults, polished smooth by chafing wind and storm.

Your bottlebrushes whisk off hangers-on; new life is launched in your male and female cones.

You stand here now — a survivor and a witness.

You've taken what no other tree can take and used it to become invincible.

Monument to endurance, you've more than endured: Shaman-like, you're also here to speak.

Through the rings of fiber and sap at your core, you tell the hidden story of this land.

You are our homeland's deepest memory — the oldest living poem of the Earth.

## THE LIVING MYTH OF SUNSHINE BRIDGE

Lynn Hoggard

Poetry

*You are my sunshine, my only sunshine  
You make me happy when skies are gray  
You'll never know, dear, how much I love you  
Please don't take my sunshine away*

—Governor Jimmie Davis

Fifty years before Alaska's try,  
Louisiana had its Bridge to Nowhere,  
named for a song its governor wrote and crooned.  
No roads from its start in swamps to its stop in cane  
fields,  
Sunshine Bridge soared across the Mississippi.

Standing one night alone at its center, my brother  
threw his high-school ring into the water.  
The girl who had worn it found another sunshine,  
had somewhere else to go. His jeweled band,  
like his sunshine, was taken far away.

An arc across the horizon, Sunshine Bridge  
sparkles in sun, but when the clouds roll in,  
its far end sometimes disappears. In dimness,  
one imagines that the bridge has ended,  
there where the fog enfolds it in the sky.

.....

Years go by. On a bridge that ends in clouds,  
a woman one day perches at its edge,  
then plunges deep into the muddy waves,  
swirling her way down to the river's bed,

seeking the sunken band, the vanished dream.

This warrior, this Lady of the Lake,  
rises from the deep in rainbowing light,  
holding tight within her lifted hand  
the magic treasure — a green-and-golden band  
now transformed — a Bridge to Everywhere.

**HIS SUICIDES**

Mark Belair

Poetry

His suicide  
followed an earlier, incremental  
suicide of the soul, a soul  
converted, when young, to the belief  
that suffering  
must not be eased  
but endured  
as proof of faith  
in God's merciful plan,  
a conviction he maintained, mercilessly,  
into old age when he found  
the wounds  
of a lifetime of suffering  
draining his heart, seemingly all at once,  
of all faith, its chambers, finally,  
empty as his gun's.

**ODE**  
Mark Belair  
Poetry

The acoustic guitars  
in a dusty instrument shop  
hang off one wall  
in an angled row, each  
awaiting, it seems, the one  
who will best know  
how to coax it  
into a progression of harmonies  
that resonate throughout  
its warm, open body; vibrations  
the player, pressed to it, absorbs  
back to the bone, guitar, and guitarist —  
and their gathering eavesdroppers —  
each made more.

**BORN AGAIN**

Mark Belair

Poetry

My son now  
a father, I'm as mesmerized  
by him  
as when he was born, for  
once again  
his face is new, his movements new,  
his cradle potential  
newly unfolding —  
a new life  
come into his, he is rendered,  
through his fatherly love,  
born again.

**The Girl with the Gold Heart**

Craig Rodgers

Fiction

She could use the money. She's hungry, she's tired. She is alone in this place so alien to her senses, a world that if bound by a logic at all it is a logic of such deranged eccentricity as to be unrecognizable as anything but a madness made corporeal, able to be seen and smelled and touched, but not known, not understood, lunacy all around.

Her boots are broken and patched and the patches too have come loose, given in to unending attrition. She knocks them together with a satisfying clap and then another and from where she sits along sidewalk she eyes the pawnshop across the busy street. She imagines the man behind the counter, eyes keen and wary and a tongue that runs to glib. She imagines his shrewd business acumen and flippant demeanor mask a depth of personality, some inner complexity both tender and strong and she is thinking of this still as her head lowers and for a time she manages a fitful sleep.

It is of the man behind the counter that she dreams. He is surly and he is loud and when she enters his store with no object in hand to sell he throws up his hands in exasperation or in prayer, but he laughs when he does so and this is a sign, this is the briefest of looks at his true self, she knows, she knows.

She stands at the counter and he asks what it is she needs and she is so hungry, she has so little left.

"I have only my heart to sell," she says.

His look is peculiar. That superficial charm has stilled in the face of some creature unprepared for, a strangeness in this moment that the cynical veteran of

this world has in all his days not encountered. She is reaching to her blouse and she is untethering each button and his breath catches as he reaches to pacify her shaking hand.

“Don’t.”

She looks to his face and he is looking back, he is shaking his head just once. He tells her to wait here and she does wait here as he steps through a door and is gone. She looks down at herself. She suppresses a sob. Each button is fastened again as she waits. She lets herself fall into a chair for sale, old wood carved into a rocker, figures on each hand rest. The shapes of angels.

When he returns he has a plate in one hand and a glass jar in the other. The jar contains milk thick and almost blue and when he hands it to her she drinks down half in two hard gulps. Eyes half lidded, lost in the exquisite taste, the wonder of it, the simplicity of this joy. He laughs. He hands her the plate.

Berries red and ripe are piled alongside a hunk of bread baked this very day in some stone oven managed in the back of a little eatery known only to a few. And she chews and she drinks and when he offers a lighthearted ribbing she laughs, a sound open and free. She bites into the bread and there is a flavor of butter like nothing she has encountered in life, a rich, smooth sensation that overwhelms, mouth waters, cheeks flush. She looks at him again and he is looking back at her a certain way and she comes to realize that yes this is the same look she is giving him and now he is touching her hand and now everything can be okay.

She wakes with a start. Streetlights have begun to pop on up and down the block and the day feels unreal, the color thin and silver under those lamps and a deepening blue beyond that as the light recedes. She

stands and she is alone here, the sidewalks free of people as if this is a dream still, as if it is only her here because it is her dream and hers alone. In the pawnshop across the way there is movement, but what moves there she cannot see. A softer light glows in those windows, a gentle world beyond the harsh fall of night. She looks each way but there is nothing to see. The traffic is gone and she is alone. She crosses the street.

A bell rings as she pushes open the door. The man behind the counter looks up at the sound, a smile polite offered up on a face plain but leaning to handsome. He asks how he can help and she blushes and she looks at her feet. She leans against the counter and she takes a breath. She steels herself, she looks into his face.

“I have only my heart to sell.”

He nods but says nothing. He waits. Her face is hot now. Numb fingers pry open a button and then another. She looks up from her work but his face is placid. She looks down again. Movements made wooden. She goes on, and she hopes he will stop her but he does not, and when she pulls open her blouse still she has hope, but he only stands waiting, looking on. She pulls the heart from her chest and sets it before him on the counter and he nods and he takes it and on a scale he adjusts bars and levers until he has measured its worth and then he is lifting a tray from beneath the counter and on the tray there lay stacks of coins which he begins to separate and arrange on the counter and she feels cold and as he is counting out stacks to equal ten vast towers of coin she buckles and drops stone dead to the tile floor.

**MAY YOU REVISIT THIS MEMORY OFTEN**

Yvonne Higgins Leach

Poetry

Your grandfather's legs your foundation,  
forget the white plastic chair holding you both.

Poolside, tops of palm trees seize the breeze  
and fronds fill your eyes in a protective dance.

Your legs meld into his, even with the beach towel  
damp between you. Your back

leans into his breathing chest, breath  
that does not need to form words when

given over to love long ago, at your birth,  
the world became yours.

All is confirmed again when you both catch  
the red flash of the flycatcher's underbelly.

Your grandfather's large hand in view,  
and he whispers: *Look!*

**MOTH SNOWSTORMS**

Yvonne Higgins Leach

Poetry

Uncle Gordon and Aunt Mary waving  
in our rearview mirror. Dad now hours  
behind the wheel. Mom up front

while my brother and I share leg space  
in the back. We close our books, surrender  
to the twilight-magnified sky, the muggy summer air.

When the curve of earth vanishes  
and the nightfall ceilings us, predictably  
they arrive — the scale-winged insects

drawn to light like humans to love.  
A *bump, bump* against the beam  
of headlights. Then *splat, splat*

against the barrier of windshield,  
and as if a sudden storm,  
the moths are like snowflakes in a blizzard.

White and gray gauzy wings spiral  
from their thumb-sized bodies.  
They churn in the air as our speeding car

splices the darkness with a harsh  
wash of manmade light. An unforgiving hurling.  
An assault.

What is now a mural of moths,  
likely thousands, like protons,

lurch and throttle until a mash  
shuts out the light. With the impossibility  
of sight, my father slows to the side of the road.  
A rag ready under the seat, he steps out  
to clean glass surfaces, crusted  
with broken limbs, mouth parts, and underwings.  
With each forceful swipe, the lights  
break brighter, shining on the moth-cluttered  
distance behind him, haunting the night.  
*They're wretches akin to rust, my mother say.*

*They'll eat your clothes, even your books.*  
And, all at once, I am startled by my sadness  
at their price of existence,  
drawn to what extinguishes them.  
Now, after just two generations,  
moth snowstorms are gone.

Nothing. Never again. Gone.

IN THEIR FUTURES  
Yvonne Higgins Leach  
Poetry

Her three teenage sons, heads down,  
lean forward, as if in wind,  
toward the ferry terminal.  
Packs firm on their backs like saddles,  
their intent: to make the early departure,  
to get the best seats. Ahead: to visit  
East Coast college campuses.  
She struggles to scurry as fast —  
her backpack heavy and slipping off her shoulder.  
She wants to enjoy the wash of morning light  
and the canopy of lilac hues overhead.  
Instead, she feels hurried,  
that fragile space of being left behind.

Her middle son hesitates,  
holds back  
until their shoulders skim one another.  
His mouth blooms kindnesses  
and reassurances that time is on their side.  
She feels a kernel of sadness—  
the world is often cruel to kind men.

Decades later, the oldest son,  
after twelve-hour days, still dreams  
of international trade laws  
and the youngest  
pushes investments for CEOs  
like vacation destinations for wealthy tourists.  
Her middle son is the one who calls  
every Saturday morning — no matter.

She reaches for the ringing phone,  
the ancestry of light  
coming through her windows,  
his kindness landing on her heart.

## POPSICLES AND A LIFETIME LATER

Yvonne Higgins Leach

Poetry

I.

The cabin porch stairs squeak  
as they sit down on the peeling paint.

The summer sun is forgiving  
in her gaze. A popsicle

in each of their hands —  
the red and orange blare

in the light. The coolness  
relieves their lips and tongues.

Their fifth summer. *My lake friend*  
is how they describe each other in winter.

How last winter changed his voice,  
and gave her body curves.

As is their ritual, they switch  
Popsicles halfway down,

and when they do, they touch.  
She cannot move her hot toes

from his calf. He feels them too—  
small buds, perfectly placed.

## II.

Because one of them will die,  
they choose to wipe the crumbs  
from the counter and not comment,  
to bring in the patio cushions when

the other one forgets, go to the movie  
the other one picks, and at times,  
push cruel words to the backs  
of their throats.

In their dailiness, they hear the clock tick,  
know eventually it will win,  
know each sun-moon cycle  
presses her heavy hands on their hearts.

Their bones might break,  
their hearts might explode,  
their minds mind forget  
their deepest memories.

Whatever becomes the final moment  
is just that — the final moment.  
For now, the rose bush they planted last  
spring grows more tender.

**THE NOTE**

Maria DeSantis

Poetry

The note was full of unanswered questions  
“It’s too much. I leave you now.”  
Why? When? How did all of this transpire?  
You existed in cold silence  
Hiding the surmounting pain  
Your color changed like an angry sea  
I wasn’t aware you were diseased  
The echoes of your smile haunt me  
Reimagining when you seemed content in life  
The pills you took brought little joy to those left behind  
You achieved eternal peace in minutes I thought you  
were still here  
With me  
Burying you doesn’t lay to rest all the unanswered  
questions  
In the note you tragically left behind.

**HEART BRAKE**

Maria DeSantis

Poetry

She cemented her feet onto the pavement  
Fearing a fall would fracture bones  
Unable to process his confession of a new love  
His piercing words still echoing  
Liquid words, dirty words, lost words  
Screams in anguish absorbed into walls, melting away  
like wax  
A deafening pulse falls silent  
No one hears the heart break  
Fragments impervious to light  
Slash away years of memories  
Her eyes forced to close to biting images  
Nauseated and wounded in a room empty of him  
She sits on the floor watching  
Shadows dance across sheets on an abandoned bed  
Time comes to comfort, but time is too slow  
She holds up a mirror  
Her image takes her hostage  
Strange to wrap her arms around herself  
He did daily  
Quiet currents surround her island  
The silence reminding her she almost forgot how  
Not to love again

**Standing Outside**

Rie Sheridan Rose

Poetry

Standing outside,  
you seem a dryad,  
there behind your  
mask of leaves...  
the longing in your eyes  
calls to my heart —  
is it company you want,  
or the freedom of the trees  
you stare at so intently?  
If I were to cut away  
the branches,  
so you could see  
beyond their barrier  
would you thank me,  
or despise the mess  
I made of things?  
What do you see,  
when you look  
from your side of the glass?  
The me outside  
looking in,  
or the you inside,  
imprisoned by leaves?  
Oh, nymph —  
be persuaded to take a chance...  
Come stand outside,  
with me.

**UNGUARDED**

Valerie Griggs

Poetry

I don't want to say  
what was exchanged (between us —  
something sacred, something fragile) —  
in that blur of sun and confession,  
because words stain  
and it was more like something for the eyes  
than for the lips;  
a clear seeing  
of something precious,  
intangible, but immediate,  
which sound would only fracture;  
an elegant curl of life rising  
from the shy, simple ordinary.

ZIHUATANEJO, 1975

Iris Litt

Poetry

We breathe as on that climb from the sea  
turn to each other as into surf  
wild as this jungle  
uncomfortable as this town  
heat that cooks away ideas  
tempting morning sun that turns and burns  
lack of light in huts  
dust of roads  
unexpected comfort of night.

Like the wild men who ride and run from gigantic green  
mountains  
to attack moving specks on innocent white beaches  
we war on each other  
then hold and heal each other against the dark sounds  
dog rooster child  
pistol shot church bell

and as we lie rooted in each other  
I remember the empty peace of civilization.

**THE VENDOR**  
Stephanie Kaplan Cohen  
Poetry

No poems today.  
Sorry, we're sold out.

The delivery truck broke down,  
and by the time of rescue,

all the poems had turned  
and the stench was unbearable.

We have nice fresh  
short stories and novellas.

Come back tomorrow.  
We'll have a wonderful new batch.

## Contributor Bios

### Victor Altshul

My second and third books of poems, *Singing with Starlings* (2015) and *Ode to My Autumn* (2017), were published by Antrim House, and two of my poems have appeared in the *Hartford Courant*. My work has recently been published in *Alabama Literary Review*, *Burningword Literary Journal*, *Cape Rock*, *Caveat Lector*, *Chantwood Magazine*, *Coachella Review*, *Existere*, *The Perch*, and *Studio One*. I am active on the board of the Connecticut Poetry Society and have given several readings throughout the state. I am a graduate of Harvard College and Yale Medical School and am on the faculty of the latter. I have been in continuous private practice of psychiatry since 1967.

### Akpa Arinzechukwu

Akpa Arinzechukwu is a Nigerian dealing with his numerous identities. His work has been published by or featured in the 2017 *Best New African Poets* anthology, *Saraba*, *Sou'wester*, *Transition*, *London Grip Poetry*, *Eastlit*, *ITCH*, *New Contrast*, *The Flash Fiction Press*, *The Rising Phoenix*, *Packingtown* and elsewhere. He was a finalist for the *Sophiamay Poetry Contest* and longlisted for the *Koffi Addo Prize for Creative Nonfiction*. He is the author of the poetry chapbook, *CITY DWELLERS* (*Splash of Red*).

### Alexandra Balasa

Alexandra Balasa attends the University of Texas at Dallas, where she is a teaching assistant and PhD student in literature and creative writing. Although she ponders existentialism, is obsessed with owls, and

collects rocks, she promises she is not a cliché. After all, she does not own any cats (the neighbour's cats, who have appropriated her house, don't count). She writes speculative fiction with a psychological edge, and her writing explores questions of identity and moral ambiguity. Her writing has appeared in venues such as PodCastle, Cosmic Roots and Eldritch Shores, and Deep Magic.

#### Mark Belair

My poems have appeared in numerous journals, including Alabama Literary Review, Atlanta Review, The Cincinnati Review, Harvard Review, Michigan Quarterly Review, Poetry East, and The South Carolina Review. My latest collection is *Watching Ourselves* (Unsolicited Press, 2017). Previous collections include *Breathing Room* (Aldrich Press, 2015); *Night Watch* (Finishing Line Press, 2013); *While We're Waiting* (Aldrich Press, 2013); and *Walk With Me* (Parallel Press of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, 2012). I have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize multiple times. Please visit [www.markbelair.com](http://www.markbelair.com)

#### Marty Carlock

For almost 20 years, I was a regular contributor to The Boston Globe and other publications; more than 30 newspapers and magazines have published some 1,600 articles under my byline. I am author of two editions of *A Guide to Public Art in Greater Boston*. At the present time, I write for Sculpture and Landscape Architecture magazines, and I review fiction and nonfiction for the Internet Review of Books.

**Stephanie Kaplan Cohen**

I am the author of a memoir **IN MY MOTHER'S HOUSE**, published by Woodley Books and poetry books **ADDITIONS AND SUBTRACTIONS** and **BODY WORK** published by Plain View Press. My work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. For many years I wrote a column "Ask Stephanie" for the Alzheimer's Association Quarterly in Westchester and Putnam, New York. I am also an editor of The Westchester Review. I have done many public and private fiction and poetry readings, and my work has been read on NPR.

**Eileen M. Cunniffe**

Eileen Cunniffe writes mostly nonfiction and often explores identity and experience through the lenses of travel, family and work. Her writing has appeared in many literary journals, including Superstition Review, Bluestem Magazine and The RavensPerch. Occasionally, her stories present themselves as prose poems. Three of Eileen's essays have been recognized with Travelers' Tales Solas Awards and another received the Emrys Journal 2013 Linda Julian Creative Nonfiction Award. Read more at: [www.eileencunniffe.com](http://www.eileencunniffe.com).

**Judy Darley**

Judy Darley is a British fiction writer, poet and journalist who can't stop writing about the fallibilities and strengths of the human mind. Her work appears in magazines and anthologies and in her debut short story collection *Remember Me To The Bees. Sky Light Rain*, her second collection, will be published by Valley Press in Fall 2019. Judy has shared her stories on BBC radio, as well as in cafés, caves, an artist's studio and a disused

church. Judy blogs at <http://www.skylightrain.com>, and tweets @JudyDarley.

### **Maria DeSantis**

I have a BA in English/Women Studies and have studied with Ivan Gold. I've worked in the hospitality industry, as an entrepreneur, and as a jack-of-all-trades. My work is forthcoming in The Borfski Press and The Cape Rock. I enjoy hiking, cooking, and yoga.

### **Jack Donahue**

Numerous short stories and poems written by Jack Donahue have been published in journals such as: North Dakota Quarterly; Newtown Literary Review; Prole (U.K.); Poetry Salzburg Review (Austria); The Main Street Rag; Bindweed (Ireland); The Almagre Review and others throughout North America, India and Europe. His first book of poems, "Just Below the Surface" is set for a fall 2018 launch. A children's picture book, "Come Play With Me By The Sea" will be published later this year. Mr. Donahue received his M.Div. degree from New Brunswick, Theological Seminary, NJ in 2008. He is married and resides on the North Fork of Long Island, New York.

### **Donna L. Emerson**

I write poetry and prose. I am recently retired from college teaching and my practice as a licensed clinical social worker. My first full-length poetry collection, *The Place of Our Meeting*, was published by Finishing Line Press in January 2018 and nominated for the California Book Award.

**Shawna Ervin**

Shawna Ervin is a candidate in the MFA program at Pacific Lutheran University where she is studying nonfiction and poetry. She is a recipient of the Linda Bierds and Carol Houck Smith Scholarship.

**Warren Paul Glover**

Warren Paul Glover (me) is an English-born British-Australian writer living in Sydney. I've been in Oz since August 2010, but have yet to develop an Australian accent. I write fiction, poetry, plays and films, and also do some acting and directing on the side. I have a dog called Monty who helps me when I have to learn lines, and it's not unusual to find me pounding the streets - script in one hand, Monty in the other - talking to myself. I also play soccer.

**F.I. Goldhaber**

F.I. Goldhaber's words capture people, places, and events with a photographer's eye and a poet's soul. As a reporter, editor, business writer, and marketing communications consultant, they produced news stories, feature articles, editorial columns, and reviews for newspapers, corporations, governments, and non-profits in five states. Now paper, electronic, and audio magazines, books, newspapers, calendars, and street signs display their poetry, fiction, and essays. More than 100 of their poems appear in dozens of publications.

Their fourth collection, *Food ♦ Family ♦ Friends*, explores how those three things send us feasting, flinching, and/or frolicking through life.

<http://www.goldhaber.net/>

**Valerie Griggs**

I have been published in Typishly, the 20th Performance Poets Association anthology, the Nassau County Poet Laureate Society anthology, The Ledge, and Bitterroot. I have an MFA in Creative Writing from Brooklyn College and an MA in Religious Studies, Spirituality/Spiritual Direction from Fordham University. I work as a full-time writing consultant/administrator and as an adjunct English instructor at Molloy College.

**Jack D. Harvey**

Jack D. Harvey's poetry has appeared in Scrivener, The Comstock Review, The Antioch Review, Bay Area Poets' Coalition, The University of Texas Review, The Piedmont Poetry Journal and a number of other on-line and in print poetry magazines over the years. The author has been a Pushcart nominee and over the ensuing years has been published in a few anthologies. The author has been writing poetry since he was sixteen and lives in a small town near Albany, N.Y. He was born and worked in upstate New York. He is retired from doing whatever he was doing before he retired.

**Alison Hicks**

My work has appeared in Eclipse, Fifth Wednesday, Gargoyle, Louisville Review, Permafrost, Poet Lore, and other journals. My poem "Color" was nominated for a Pushcart Prize by Green Hills Literary Lantern. My books include two full-length collections of poems, You Who Took the Boat Out (Unsolicited Press, 2017) and Kiss (PS Books, 2011), a chapbook, Falling Dreams (Finishing Line Press, 2006), and a novella, Love: A Story of Images (AWA Press, 2004), a finalist in the 1999 Quarterly West Novella Competition. Awards include the 2011

Philadelphia City Paper Poetry Prize and two Pennsylvania Council on the Arts fellowships. I am founder of Greater Philadelphia Wordshop Studio, which offers community-based writing workshops.

**Lynn Hoggard**

A dyslexic misfit born in Cajun Louisiana, I was slow to pursue poetry full time, instead chasing and running from snakes and being generally hypnotized by my violent, colorful culture. Finally, poetry took me over, and I place the poetic act at the very top of my life pyramid. I've published two collections of poems. My latest, *Bushwhacking Home* (TCU Press, 2017), has won the 2018 Press Women of Texas award for best book of poetry.

**Christopher Kuhl**

I earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy and one in music composition, as well as two masters of music degrees and a PhD in Interdisciplinary Arts. I taught English at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. I enjoy reading a wide array of literature, as well as philosophy and history. My other interests include studying higher mathematics and classical Greek and Hebrew, as well as drawing and painting with acrylics. I am never bored.

**Yvonne Higgins Leach**

Yvonne Higgins Leach is the author of *Another Autumn* (WordTech Editions, 2014). Her poems have appeared in many journals and anthologies including *The South Carolina Review*, *South Dakota Review*, *Spoon River Review* and *POEM*. A native of Washington state, she earned a Master of Fine Arts from Eastern Washington

University. She spent decades balancing a career in communications and public relations, raising a family, and pursuing her love of writing poetry. Now a full-time poet, she splits her time living on Vashon Island and in Spokane, Washington. For more information, visit [www.yvonnehigginsleach.com](http://www.yvonnehigginsleach.com)

### Iris Litt

I have taught Woodstock Writers Workshops for twenty years, and have held writing workshops for the New York Public Library Educational Alliance and others. I have taught creative writing as an adjunct at Bard College and SUNY/Ulster. I attended Ohio State University and Universidad de las Americas, Mexico City, and obtained my bachelor's degree. I currently live in Woodstock, NY and New York's Greenwich Village, and winter on Anna Maria Island, FL, which was the inspiration for my book *Snowbird*.

### Katherine Nazzaro

Katherine Nazzaro graduated from Bridgewater State University in 2017 with a major in English and a concentration in Classics. She has loved Greek mythology since she was a child, which influences a lot of her writing. In her spare time she volunteers at her local library, forgets the name of every book she's ever read and enjoyed, and changes her mind twice a minute.

### Suzanne O'Connell

Suzanne O'Connell is a poet living in Los Angeles. Her recently published work can be found in *Poet Lore*, *The Menacing Hedge*, *Steam Ticket*, *Rubbertop Review*, *Paperplates Magazine*, *Glint Literary Journal*, *American*

Chordata, Alembic, and Forge. O'Connell was nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize. Her first poetry collection, "A Prayer For Torn Stockings," was published by Garden Oak Press in 2016.

#### **Michael Mackin O'Mara**

Michael Mackin O'Mara works for a nonprofit in West Palm Beach, Florida. He is the managing editor of the South Florida Poetry Journal concentrating on audio and video submissions. He has been published by Chantwood Magazine, Silver Birch Press and Indolent Books. His hobbies include photography, videography, and graphic arts.

#### **Ailey O'Toole**

Ailey O'Toole is a queer poet and bartender who writes about feminism, empathy, and pain. She hopes everyone who reads her poems feels a little less alone in their struggle. Her work has previously appeared in The Broke Bohemian, After the Pause, Ghost City Review, Rising Phoenix Review, and others. You can follow her adventures on twitter at @ms\_ocoole.

#### **Trevor Pyle**

Trevor Pyle is a short-story writer and poet in the Pacific Northwest. His work has appeared in McSweeney's Internet Tendency, Apeiron Review and other journals.

#### **Dana Robbins**

After a long career as a lawyer, I obtained an MFA from the Stonecoast Writers program. My first book, The Left Side of My Life, was published by Moon Pie Press in 2015. My poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in many journals or anthologies, including The Fish Poetry

Anthology, Drunken Boat, Paterson Literary Review, Calyx, The Cape Rock, Muddy River Poetry Review, Poetica Magazine, Moth Magazine, and The Jewish Women's Literary Annual. My poem "To My Daughter Teaching Science" was featured by Garrison Keillor on the Writers Almanac in November 2015.

### **Craig Rodgers**

Craig Rodgers is the author of stories that have appeared in Juked, Heart of Farkness, Chicago Literati, Not One of Us, and others. He has an extensive collection of literary rejections folded into the shape of cranes and spends most of his time writing in North Texas.

### **Cam Rogers**

Isn't good at writing bios. Follow him on Instagram @cam\_rogers

### **Rie Sheridan Rose**

Rie Sheridan Rose multitasks. Her poetry has appeared in Dreams and Nightmares, Illumen, and Penumbra, as well as numerous anthologies. She has authored ten novels, six poetry chapbooks, and lyrics for dozens of songs. More info on [www.riewriter.com](http://www.riewriter.com). She tweets as @RieSheridanRose.

### **Barbara Ryder-Levinson**

I am an avid traveler and owned a travel agency for two years. I have been to fifty-three countries on four continents and counting. All of my personal and travel experience feed my poetry.

**Eva-Maria Sher**

Born in Germany at the end of WWII, I was already writing poems as a child. At seventeen, I emigrated to the United States, studied literature, taught, raised three children, and have in the past ten years rediscovered my passion for writing. I live on Whidbey Island, WA, where I offer workshops for children and adults in poetry, book-making, collage, and puppetry. I recently published Chewing Darkness, my first book of poems and am working on a second one. I have written and composed a CD of lullabies, and I am the author/illustrator of The Scintillating Little Dragon, a coloring book about nurturing the creative spirit.

**Barbara Tramote**

I worked as a professor in the school for graduate studies at SUNY Empire State College for many years and have worked as a poet-in-the-schools in New York City for a decade. I formerly owned a children's bookstore in Brooklyn Heights, NY.

**Rachel Tramonte**

Rachel Tramonte lives in Cleveland, OH. Her work has appeared in Bluestem Magazine, The Broken Plate, Common Ground Review, Green Hills Literary Lantern, Jelly Bucket, Slab, These Fragile Lilacs and Third Wednesday. She received her MA in English and Creative Writing from Binghamton University. She lives and writes in Cleveland, OH with her partner and their two daughters.

**Marc Tretin**

I was the second runner-up for the Solstice literary magazine poetry prize in 2013. I am the 2015 winner of the Audrey Wasson and Carol Leseure Scholarship in Poetry. My poetry collection, *Pink Mattress*, has been published by New York Quarterly Press in 2016.

#### Laura C. Wendorff

Laura Wendorff is professor of English, Ethnic Studies, and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. She has been published in several journals, including *After the Pause*, *Bluestem*, *Foliate Oak Literary Magazine*, *Minetta Review*, *Sanskrit Literary-Arts Magazine*, *Spillway*, *Temenos*, and *Wisconsin Poets Calendar*. Wendorff's essay "Worth The Risk: Writing Poetry About Children With Special Needs" was nominated for a Best of the Net Award and the Pushcart Prize.

#### Bill Wolak

Bill Wolak has just published his fifteenth book of poetry entitled *The Nakedness Defense* with Ekstasis Editions. His collages have appeared recently in *Naked in New Hope 2017*, *The 2017 Seattle Erotic Art Festival*, *Poetic Illusion*, *The Riverside Gallery*, Hackensack, NJ, the *2018 Dirty Show* in Detroit, and *2018 The Rochester Erotic Arts Festival*.



## **Submission Guidelines**

Door is a Jar Magazine is looking for well-crafted poetry, fiction, nonfiction, drama and artwork for our digital publication. Please read over these submission guidelines carefully before submitting any work.

Contributors can submit to multiple categories; however, only submit once to each category until you have received our decision about your piece.

Our publication steers away from academic writing and publishes short, conversational works that use familiar language. Our magazine features new artists and writers and works that are accessible for all readers. Please look at our current and archived issues before submitting your work. Works that are confusing, abstract, or unnecessarily fancy will not be considered.

We only accept new, unpublished work. If you have posted something to your website or social media, this counts as being published.

Upload your submissions to Submittable with the category you are submitting to and your first and last name as the filename. Within the cover letter please include your full name, contact info, and 3-sentence bio. (We're not as interested in how many degrees you have, or how widely you've been published. Instead, we want to hear about the real you. We want to know about the little things that spur you along.)

We accept simultaneous submissions; however, please notify us immediately if a piece is accepted elsewhere.

We reserve first initial publishing rights and then all rights revert back to the author. We do not pay contributors at this time.

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[doorisajarmagazine.net](http://doorisajarmagazine.net)